

September 15, 1954

Dear Bruce:

I write now in great haste and with a bad conscience for not having replied sooner to yours of July 27 (+). We were away on "holiday" most of the summer: briefly at a symposium at the University of Michigan, then at Woods Hole. Your letter was eventually forwarded to me there, but this is the first moment (or half-moment) I've had. We had a splendid time at Woods Hole, in a mixture of lazy work (at the library, and discussions with the numerous geneticists in residence, viz. Watson-Crick, Ephrussi's, Sonneborn, Moewus....) and industrious play at the beach. However, we were more or less chased home by Hurricane "Carol" which did a lot of damage on Cape Cod, mostly by seas from the storm tide. We were no sooner home than we had to complete negotiations and move (ugh!) into a new home that we have finally purchased. My brother Seymour helped us no end, but we still have not finished installing the furniture, unpacking clothing, etc. Then the Cavalli's arrived on the day we moved, and we are still looking, almost desperately for a place for them to live. For some reason, housing has gotten much tighter. But they are the most charming of people, and we are delighted to have them as our house guests in the interim. This is also the season of advising and registering ~~and~~ students, and planning an essentially new course in GOM (up to ~~know~~ I'd been catering primarily to the Bact. students who've not had much genetics before, and I want now to offer something a little more sophisticated for our own students). All this by way of extenuation for whatever irrationality you may notice now,

To answer some of your more explicit questions that require the least deliberation, I have several times watched the division of a motile cells giving immediately 1 motile, 1 non-motile daughter (immediately= within perhaps a second or less). On other (rather vague grounds) I have also been concerned whether bacterial fission is meristic, or whether there is perhaps a mother-daughter polarity. You will recall, for example the typically unipolar localization of formazan in tetrazolium treated cultures: it would be amusing to try to combine these experiments.

My first reaction to your suggestion that we start to write up the results now was not enthusiastic, as I would prefer to wait until the whole picture became clearer. But perhaps there would be no disadvantage to a preliminary account, on an essentially observational level: I would be opposed to too much speculation until the experiments were in sight to resolve the issues. May I suggest an account of the scope of a paper for the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences here? This would be ~~essentially~~ generally understood to be a preliminary account on a problem whose ultimate settlement was not in immediate view.

I did not fully understand your p. 2— how do you distinguish E cells? Is the special point of this experiment the demonstration (finally!) of substantial trails from micromanipulated cells transplanted to agar?

Yours, too hastily,


Joshua Lederberg